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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: September 23, 1955

SUBJECT: Finnish-Soviet Relations

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. Albert Weitnauer, Economic Counselor, Legation of Switzerland  
Mr. Grant G. Hilliker, BNA

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Mr. Weitnauer asked to come in to discuss the recent Finnish-Soviet agreements providing for withdrawal from the naval base at Porkkala and a 20-year renewal of the 1948 treaty of mutual assistance.

I told Mr. Weitnauer that the Soviet action in withdrawing from Porkkala appeared to be aimed mainly at supporting internationally the Soviet demands for withdrawal from foreign bases, i.e., NATO bases. A secondary objective might have been to win friends in Finland, particularly with an eye to the Finnish presidential elections in January 1956. I further reviewed the press comment which indicated that the strategic significance of the withdrawal was minimal and that the Finnish agreement to renew the 1948 treaty was not surprising. The Finns therefore welcomed the Soviet action which apparently was obtained without any substantial Finnish concessions. Barring secret concessions of which we had thus far no indication, the Department also welcomed the Soviet withdrawal from Porkkala.

Mr. Weitnauer inquired whether there was any indication that the recent events would increase the unity of the Northern European countries. I said that the action of the Soviets had been welcomed in those countries, but that thus far we had no real sign of a change in the past Soviet opposition to permitting Finland to draw closer to Sweden, Norway and Denmark. In the past the Soviets were willing to give the appearance of favoring a Nordic neutrality arrangement as a means of trying to lure Norway

and Denmark

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and Denmark away from their NATO commitments. I affirmed that there were no NATO troops stationed in Norway and Denmark, referring to the Norwegian promise to the Soviets to that effect and to the Danish attitude on such questions with which Mr. Weitnauer was familiar.

As a possible step in the direction of a closer Finnish relationship with Scandinavia I told Mr. Weitnauer of recent indications in the Finnish press of a greater boldness in discussing Finnish foreign policy. Should the withdrawal from Porkkala reinforce such tendencies, I personally thought it would be all to the good. I emphasized, however, that any consideration of a Nordic neutrality bloc by the U.S. Government (which question he had posed as a possible alternative western policy designed to provide some "Give" in dealings with the Soviet Union) was strictly academic.

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